An Inaugural Dissertation
On the
Influence of the Passions
On the
Human System.

Submitted to the Examination
of the
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Trustees and Medical Faculty
of the
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Degree
of
Doctor of Medicine.

By
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Pennsylvania.

January 1st 1827.

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Preface.

Although I am very sensible, that on a perusal of this Essay, it will be found to be fraught with numerous imperfections: yet, knowing the genius and judgment — and consequent liberality of sentiment, of those gentlemen, to whose examination it is most respectfully submitted, I hope to claim a share of their indulgence, and confidently trust, that due allowance will be extended for my inexperience.

Notwithstanding I have attempted to speak of the application of mental remedies to practice; yet I would not on any account wish to be understood to entertain an exclusive confidence in those powerful agents. On the contrary it is evident, that when treating particular diseases, it will not only be proper, but absolutely necessary, that other remedies,

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according to circumstances, should, at the same time, be brought in to our aid.

But that the passions exercise a most powerful influence over the body, I think is sufficiently obvious. And they therefore justly merit a share of the serious attention of every judicious practitioner.

In viewing the influence of the passions upon the human system, an unbounded theme is unfolded to our view, for investigation. — And it is with peculiar diffidence, that I attempt to enter, at this time, upon the consideration of this very interesting, and most sublime subject. —

Notwithstanding its vast importance, I believe it to be a subject, that is too generally neglected, or overlooked, by very many of the medical profession.

Although the great Author of our being,

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whose paternal care is so conspicuous throughout all his works, has seen proper to reserve some subjects within his sacred arcana; — yet, in his infinite wisdom, he has condescended to endow man with a capacity to acquire knowledge, and with judgment to apply it. — Hence, the more he becomes conversant with subordinate causes and their consequences, the more is he qualified for extensive usefulness among his fellows. And probably no class in society have greater occasion to direct their attention to the investigation of this subject, than the practitioners of the healing art. ———

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Passions.

It is universally acknowledged, and sufficiently demonstrated, that the most intimate connexion and mutual dependence exist between mind and matter, which nothing but the mortal pang of death can dissolve.

To trace the effects of corporeal derange-ment on the constitution of the mind, or the faculties of the soul, is foreign from my present purpose — these are the subjects of daily and melancholy observation. But the influence of the passions upon the human system, is the subject which now more im-mediately claims our attention.

Plato was so struck with the ef-fects of the passions upon the body, that he imagined, all diseases of the body proceeded from the soul.

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by the term passions, I include the whole range of mental emotions from the most placid meditation up to a paroxysm of rage or ecstacy on the one hand and down to an angry or despairing on the other.

These various emotions are said to tranquillize, to depress, to transport and to ruffle the soul: but as it is more consistent with the present subject to trace similar effects upon the body — instances of which are the product of every moment's observation, in a greater or less degree.

The nervous and muscular systems are continually under the influence of the mental emotions. For example we all experience some palpitations and tremors upon hearing the postman rap, when we are in anxious expecta

tion of receiving an important intelligence? Not unfrequently a mere inconsiderable sound, such as a knock, the sight of an important letter — merely through an over agitation, or the effect of the present emotion, produces palpitation of the heart &c.

But it is not the mind alone upon which the passions produce their effects. Their influence is extended even to the minutest capillaries — for instance, all on the sudden some to cross the imagination of a sensitive, and lo! instantaneously are the capillaries of the whole face reddened and gorged with blood. — Permit the emotion to be changed to fear and almost as instantaneously as we observe the same effects, blanch and wrinkle — induced by a contrary.

Certain passions of the mind are known invariably to cause an accumulation of blood in particular parts of the body, and in those parts only when they are excited.

The passions are represented as being the active forces of the soul. They are its highest powers brought into movement and exertion. They are not inaptly compared to wind and fire, which are instrumental in carrying on many of the benificent operations of nature. But when they rise to undue violence, or deviate from their proper course, their path is uniformly marked with ruin and devastation. In like manner are the passions to the body, either rigid or destructive, according to their direction or degree of violence.

[illegible] to be [illegible], [illegible] as increase the force of the mind and otherwise act on some part of the system, and such a [illegible] them — producing a salutary effect.

[illegible] are most subject to derangement are the [illegible] exciting [illegible] are — Love, Joy, Grief, Fear, and Anger — which I shall consider in order, and then proceed to notice some of the most prominent effects resulting from the morbid excitement of various the passions or emotions of the mind, which are so potent in the production of deleterious consequences upon the human system.

In order to illustrate the foregoing positions, it will be necessary for me

[illegible] quite [illegible] [illegible]
to [illegible] from the [illegible] of [illegible]
attention and from the [illegible] [illegible]
individuals [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to
[illegible] with some of the most important [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

Hope is perhaps the most [illegible]
feeling that human [illegible] in our mind
and when [illegible], it is certainly a
most powerful and [illegible] [illegible].
Even founded upon correct and virtuous
principles it is not only conducive to
health of body, but contributes greatly
to the happiness of those around it, in
it is introduced. But when disappointed
in its object — when its fondest affec-
tions are treated with neglect — if it be
[illegible] [illegible], it leaves a [illegible] [illegible]
behind, and general terminates in
those [illegible] which are [illegible] [illegible].

Instances [illegible] without [illegible] might be enumerated in order to illustrate the devastating influence of this poison upon the human system. But as it is evident that to enter fully into the consideration and merits of so important a subject as that, one would necessarily cover the dissertation far beyond limits. [illegible] purposes [illegible] forbid [illegible] it to any extent.

This poison although implanted in the [illegible] breast by a beneficent Creator for wise and good purposes; yet in its marked and irresistible career it has been more effectual to have ultimately destroyed more victims than the conquerors sword, or martial weapons have ever slain.

The investigation of this subject up to the remotest Instances of human

cannot be published or quoted, but I may be permitted to allude to the medical profession, and through it to the expected [illegible] will be given to the most important [illegible] in the development and treatment of many [illegible] and [illegible] diseases.

—••—

Joy is a highly pleasurable and [illegible] feeling — and when moderately excited very great, and does no harm! — quicken the circulation and the [illegible] to use [illegible] are uniform — preventing the formation of disease, and facilitating the cure when it has formed. But when carried to excess — and more particularly when it remains as a [illegible] feeling it

not unfrequently produces dangerous and even fatal consequences. —

Thus we are informed that Pope in the 17th year of his age, confined by the agitation of his spirits on the reception of the fatal news of the capture of Quebec, concerning which he had entertained no small anxiety. Byron on the 19th year of his age

He does respect to the news of Pope was received on hearing the news of the capture of Lord Cornwallis and his army during the American revolutionary war. That he died suddenly with an apoplexy.

We learn likewise that the son of the famous Leibnitz died of apoplexy running on old chest and remarkable finding in it a large quantity of gold. And moreover, that several persons died from the same

cause, on introducing the vaccination
virus to the arm of the little [illegible]
on [illegible] the [illegible].

If we have a Tissot and a Jenner
and the system becomes predisposed
or not to sustain the emotions connected
with it — so we might unfavorably
or advantageously fortify ourselves with
the necessary shame & firmness, in order
to enter into it to most signal
and advantageous results.

I have already intimated that you
will detect the cure of disease. Thus
Dr. Harris — surgeon of our navy informs
us in his lectures that the doubts of
[illegible] whose observations were
so victorious, uniformly lead
much more readily than when
they have been depressed — and
vice versa. ——

A person labouring under gout, who for some offence was condemned to lose his meal; as he was carried out to be executed received the most unexpected news of his pardon — which had so remarkable an effect upon him that although he was quite exhausted with pain, and had lost the use of his limbs; yet he got up on his legs in an instant, and walked with remarkable quickness and agility, and he lived many years after, without the least touch of the disorder. Bacon, p. xxiv.

Laughter seems in some measure to be connected with joy and when excessive sometimes produces rupture of a blood vessel either in the lungs, liver or brain. In such case a case of hæmorrhagia induced by it which has a fatal issue. See relation two other cases

have it induced sudden death.

A similar instance is related by Dr. [illegible] of a young girl who was in the habit of letting some digitalis by mistake [illegible] "Do you not know 'go now,' said the girl, instead of 'go home'?" [illegible] tickled with the joke, fell on just that [illegible] laughing.

Mere excessive laughter is not often [illegible] with fatal consequences. It is accompanied by pain in the left side [illegible] and the chest.

A sudden fit of laughter is sometimes [illegible] with the most light results. [illegible] we are told that a celebrated [illegible] was afflicted with a most alarming inspiration, which he was in the very point of [illegible] a man who was present had held [illegible]

masters wig and with his gold headed cane made him a low bow, and began to walk about the room in a manner of great consequence. The little strutting and self assumed dignity of Dick, so tickled the fancy of Mr. Jessen as to excite an immoderate fit of laughter. His imprisonment at least — the fun-loving master was thrown off guard, to the great astonishment of all his attendants, & was perfectly recovered at his heart.

Grief like a worm corrodes the powers of the mind and hurries the whole system into disease. The circulation languishes, the appetite and digestion fail, hence arise obstructions and other distressing complaints. Dr Rush tells us

[illegible]

[illegible]

Years on the [illegible] and [illegible] to be restrained by an attendant to prevent the [illegible] to be opposite the green grass, by diminishing the [illegible] motion in the head and neck; and by nothing my [illegible] in respiration arose in consequence of the disease.

A gentleman aged [illegible] and [illegible] of a [illegible] calculous, pale and [illegible] appetite and strength great [illegible] — hot, [illegible] with extreme [illegible] — frequent [illegible] — breathing difficult with an anxiety of the precordia to such a degree that at times he seemed to expire — pulse weak and for the most part unequal and sometimes inter-

mitting. At length an intermittent colour of the face supervened, with an increase of the pulsation at the wrist and a swelling of the feet & legs at times to the thighs and scrotum. Medicines were resorted to but the disease gained ground and the patient died on the 6th.

Vol. II. p. 392.

When the news came to Buda there was among the German captains a nobleman whose son fell in battle while gallantly fighting the enemy. His companions all admired his bravery, and were much grieved at seeing him fall. While they were examining him, the old nobleman, not knowing it was his son, came running to see who it was. In recognizing his son, he grew suddenly stiff, with his eyes open and fell dead.

Sultan. x. p. 250.

Dr. Jones mentions the case of Dr. Fitz, the Digitalis, who died suddenly on warning the administrant, is done. Mr. Prudence and Sir Thomas State that a young lady, the most magnificent death, when a cone that the subject was suddenly exploded a frame work is sometimes hysterical or not.

A very remarkable instance of the influence of nerves is sufficient. The case by Dr. Brown as having occurred at the Hospital de la Salpetrière in Paris in the year 1820. A widow, aged 40 years of age, woman in good respectability, good health, left her. She was astounded with horror, on learning that her daughter with two children in her arms, had thrown herself out of a window and was dashed

to prove that in one night a child
has been laid to rest because we must
that is a negro. This book of ours
is meant to show that we are carry
ing out the same intention which
were mentioned, the one objective of
the surgeon is the institution, and the
skin and general conformation in
structure with that of the negro.

Flor. says Dr. Bower was placed in
mind as a doctrine for all humanities.
But it is our opinion the escape
of it is uncertain and sometimes fatal.

We are told by Dr. Bower that it pro-
duces tremors, fat, vitiations, global hetero-
chromia, aphonia, convul-
sions opposite mania, epilepsy, asthma
ia, and death. In addition to these

[illegible] effects of [illegible] it [illegible] immediately. Twice in a peculiar manner when he was [illegible] the head. First, in changing it to a pure white colour, and second, in causing it to fall off the head — during it completely came. An instance of this was communicated to Dr. Lee by Dr. Beech, who informed him that he knew a case of it in a gentleman who was in Lisbon at the time of the great earthquake there in the year 1755.

A young Frenchman who for a capital crime was condemned to die was so terrified at having his sentence that in one night he became grey as in old age. He was pardoned by King Ferdinand, who said he had been sufficiently punished for his fault, seeing he had exchanged the [illegible] of his youth for the hoary locks of age. [illegible]

An instance of diarrhoea from fear occurred a few weeks since at the Pennsylvania Hospital, in an old soldier who came into the operating room with a dislocated humerus. On seeing a splendid display of instruments &c. which he erroneously imagined were intended for him, he was so overcome with fear, as scarcely to be able to stand, and immediately complained of griping in his bowels, which was soon followed by a diarrhoea.

I am acquainted with a very respectable lady in Philadelphia, who uniformly faints, and generally vomits, upon seeing certain animals. A few months ago she accidentally saw a toad hop immediately before her. She instantly ejected the contents of the stomach, and fainted; in which state

she remained about twenty minutes, and was afterwards completely recovered so as not to be able to assist as nurse for two weeks.

The final one instance mentioned by Dr. Cook of a soldier in whom fever produced not only fever but a mortification from a blister, which terminated his life.

It is related in Christian's H.B. 21. that some girls went out to see a person who had been executed and hung in chains one of them threw several stones at the gibbet and at last struck the body with such violence as to make it move — at which she was so much terrified, as to imagine the dead person was alive and had come down from the gibbet, and was running after her. She hastened home, and not recovering to consider the idea died in consequence.

[illegible] a notice in N. A. [illegible], of a fatal case. This is an account of a person of a large and [illegible] that was seized with epileptic fits, some afterwards on seeing a large dog, so much so, that [illegible] the sight of a dog ever afterwards.

I am informed by an eminent physician in Philadelphia of a case of epilepsy induced by fright, which terminated in death in a few days.

It appears that epilepsy may be induced by merely witnessing another in that disease. Thus we have a notice in account of a person in an hospital falling down in an epileptic fit in the sight of the other patients, the effect of which was so strong that numbers of them became immediately affected in the same manner and their parox[illegible]

tissues, and were repeated at the eight or one another in that state. The opinion of the celebrated Dr. Brown was requested on this occasion. He judiciously reflected that these affections were originally produced by impressions made upon the mind, and that the most proper means to cure would be, to counteract these impressions, by rendering still more powerful, with this view in direction actual cautions to be prepared, and kept in readiness to be applied to the person who should next be affected. The commencement was that not one was afterwards affected. Falconer on the passions p. 20.

I have also been informed that the late Dr. Kuhn saw six patients in the Pennsylvania Hospital affected with convulsions in consequence of hearing one of the patients fall down in a fit.

It is related that one of the [illegible] was taken by the Turks with Admiral [illegible]. Thinking the admiral was about to [illegible] his head, when he [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to the Russian [illegible] a [illegible] and [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

In [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in France, [illegible] by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that they were [illegible] in the dark without harm. The next day, on [illegible] the perilous situation he had been in the preceding night, his hair turned [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in the time of the [illegible] revolution, when the minds of [illegible] were involved in a constant state of excitement and alarm. [illegible] in the [illegible].

Such is one of the most extraordinary cases of sympathetic warning, or rather phenomena in the revival of the most intimate friends. Thus we are told that, a man disguised in the form of a spirit did appear, seized another who was sitting under a narcotic fit of gout — dragged him down stairs with the gouty limb trailing along the ground — paying no regard to his terrible cries — and at last left him on the cold earth to shift for himself. The gouty patient, who upon coming out of his trance, finding himself assaulted by the supposed ghost, started on his legs and gathering his faculties with infinite ease up, and opening the window of the chamber, alarmed all the neighbourhood with his noise. Moreover he got well, and never afterwards had a symptom of gout. Ben Jonson. Vol. XIII. p. 23.

the other person dr. Lion, a retired
F. & S. Dan — in a detailed account of
his affliction with rheumatism, which
had not worked for more than two
years. The family lived at one hair
stairs, & circumstances occurred one even-
ing, to be alarmed the family, that
they all went down stairs. One girl not
wishing to be left alone, and in her
fright forgetting her complaint, and
also, she never afterwards had a symp-
tom of rheumatism. Extraordinary, p. 1.

A boy having by mistake taken a quan-
tity of poison, which he was thrown into
extreme agony, ran out into the kitchen
in search of water. His dying mother,
roused by the mournful cry, ran towards
him, hastened, got out of bed, and coming
down stairs, found her son recovered;
and not conscious of her own ills, tried to

sotia Tiree of his case; and, though for several years he had been subject in the most dreadful manner under asthma, and a nervous affection, she no longer felt either; and from that time for upwards of two years she remained in perfect health.

European magazine Vol. XXXIV. p. 4.

Fear is known sometimes even to arrest pain, as in tooth ache, parturition &c. I have frequently known patients to labour under the most excruciating tooth ache, and instantly, upon the appearance of the dentist, all the pain vanished. I presume every practitioner has witnessed occasionally a total suspension of labour pain upon his first appearance in the room. Professor Dewees gives an instance of labour pain being suspended for two weeks in con-

sequence of his presence in the room. Most probably in these instances, the active agent is fear combined with a sense of delicacy &c. But as these agents lose their influence, nature again resumes her task, and the process continues.

There is no doubt that fear of pain has very considerable influence in muscular contraction in the act of parturition, and in our attempts to reduce dislocations &c. Remove this from the mind, or abstract the mind itself for a moment, and we remove the greatest obstacle with which we have to contend during the process.

I was happy to find this idea supported by the observations of Professor Gibson a few days since, in his excellent lectures on dislocations &c.

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Anger, of all passions is the most unreasonable, and directly perhaps the most destructive in its effects upon the system. It produces a preternatural determination of blood to the head, an increased discharge of saliva, unusual bodily strength, convulsions, hysteria, apoplexy, and death. Sometimes it produces paleness, tremors, sickness at stomach, vomiting, quick respiration, syncope, and asphyxia. In this instance it is probably combined with fear, which may account for the abstraction of blood from the head, and its determination to other parts of the body.

From a knowledge of its deleterious effects upon the stomach, heart, and liver, Dr. Johnson cautions every person who has the least tendency to complaints of these important organs, to be incessantly on

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